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THE UNCANNY
X-MEN™
TM

NEVER LET IT BE SAID THAT THOSE MUTANT SUPER-HEROES -- THE **UNCANNY X-MEN** -- DON'T KNOW HOW TO MAKE AN ENTRANCE -- IN THIS CASE, INTO THE GREENWICH VILLAGE APARTMENT OF THEIR FRIEND, PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR MISTY KNIGHT. **NIGHTCRAWLER** TELEPORTS, **KITTY PRYDE** PHASES THROUGH THE WALL. **WOLVERINE, STORM** AND **COLOSSUS**, HOWEVER, RESORT TO A MORE TRADITIONAL METHOD.

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I LIVE HERE!
WHO ARE YOU PEOPLE-- AND WHAT'S THE IDEA OF BUSTING INTO MY HOUSE?! YOU COULD SCARE A GIRL HALF TO DEATH!
GEE, HER FACE IS AWFULLY FAMILIAR. I WISH I COULD PLACE IT.
I APOLOGIZE FOR CAUSING YOU UNDUE ALARM. MY NAME IS STORM. WE ARE FRIENDS OF MISTY'S. THIS IS STILL HER APARTMENT, IS IT NOT?

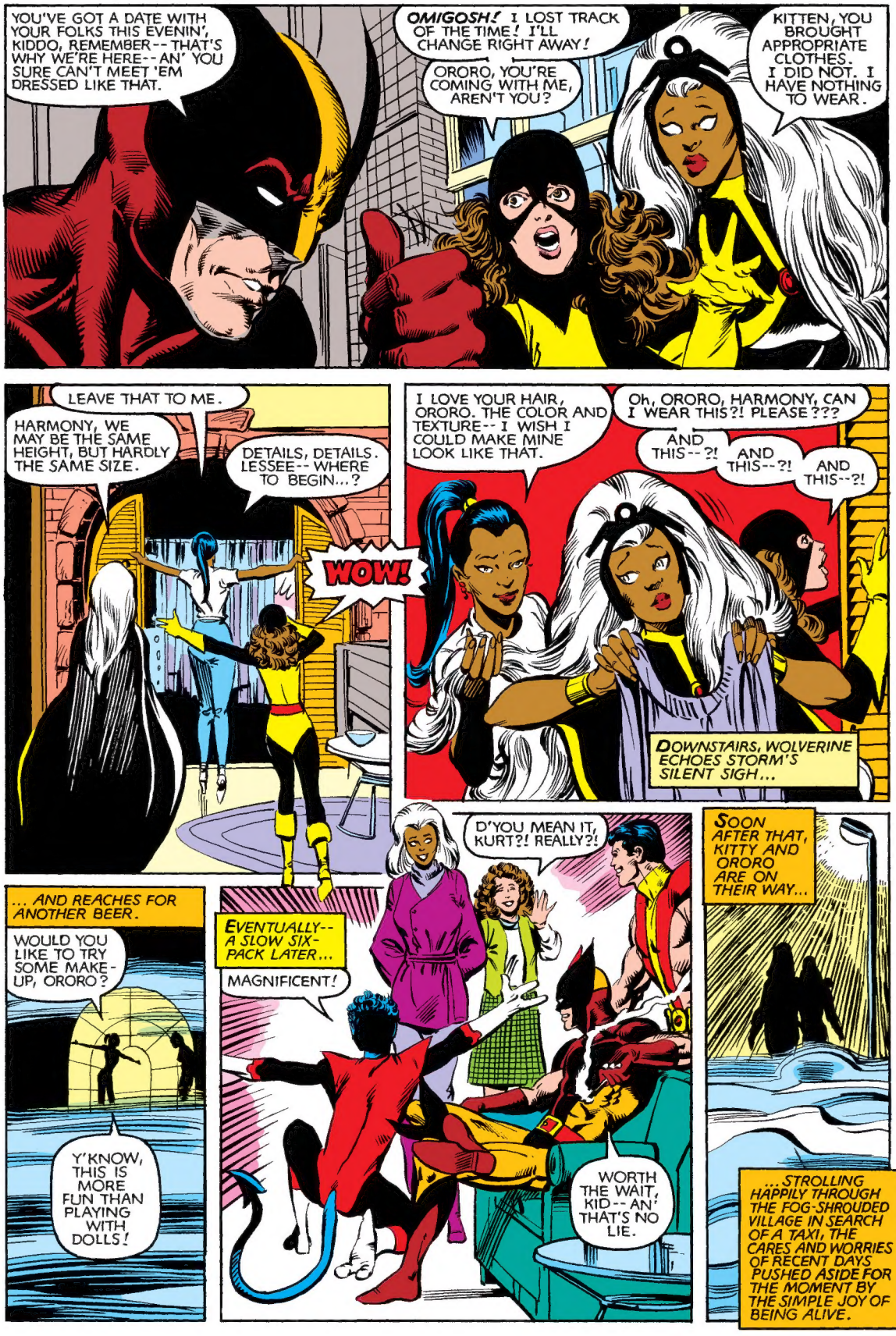
IT'S OUR APARTMENT. I'M HER ROOM-MATE.
HARMONY YOUNG!
YOU KNOW THE LADY, KID?
BOY, DO I! SHE'S ONE OF THE TOP FASHION MODELS IN NEW YORK!

AN HONOR OBVIOUSLY WELL DESERVED. ENCHANTÉ, MAM'SELLE.
≡Giggle≡
THAT'S THE SPIRIT, ELF. MAKE NICE WITH THE LADY. AS FER ME, IF EV'RYTHIHG'S COOL...
...I'M SCROUNGIN' MYSELF A BREW.

AS EVER, WOLVERINE, THE SOUL OF TACT AND DIPLOMACY...
WE HAD A STANDING INVITATION FROM MISTY TO BE HER GUESTS, IF THE NEED EVER AROSE. WE HAVE BEEN OUT OF TOUCH RECENTLY. WE DID NOT KNOW SHE WAS SHARING THE APARTMENT.
WE DO NOT MEAN TO INTRUDE, Ms. YOUNG. WE'LL BE ON OUR WAY.

HEY, NO PROBLEM.
IF IT'S OKAY WITH MISTY...

...IT'S OKAY WITH ME.
I LIKE HAVING GUYS AROUND, ESPECIALLY WHEN THEY'RE CUTE.
WHAT'S SHE TALKING ABOUT?
COLOSSUS ISN'T "CUTE."


YOU'VE GOT A DATE WITH YOUR FOLKS THIS EVENIN', KIDDO, REMEMBER-- THAT'S WHY WE'RE HERE-- AN' YOU SURE CAN'T MEET 'EM DRESSED LIKE THAT.
OMIGOSH! I LOST TRACK OF THE TIME! I'LL CHANGE RIGHT AWAY!
ORORO, YOU'RE COMING WITH ME, AREN'T YOU?
KITTEN, YOU BROUGHT APPROPRIATE CLOTHES. I DID NOT. I HAVE NOTHING TO WEAR.
LEAVE THAT TO ME.
HARMONY, WE MAY BE THE SAME HEIGHT, BUT HARDLY THE SAME SIZE.
DETAILS, DETAILS. LESSEE-- WHERE TO BEGIN...?
WOW!
I LOVE YOUR HAIR, ORORO. THE COLOR AND TEXTURE-- I WISH I COULD MAKE MINE LOOK LIKE THAT.
Oh, ORORO, HARMONY, CAN I WEAR THIS?! PLEASE???
AND THIS--?!
AND THIS--?!
AND THIS--?!
DOWNSTAIRS, WOLVERINE ECHOES STORM'S SILENT SIGH...
... AND REACHES FOR ANOTHER BEER.
WOULD YOU LIKE TO TRY SOME MAKE-UP, ORORO?
Y'KNOW, THIS IS MORE FUN THAN PLAYING WITH DOLLS!
EVENTUALLY-- A SLOW SIX-PACK LATER...
MAGNIFICENT!
D'YOU MEAN IT, KURT?! REALLY?!
WORTH THE WAIT, KID-- AN' THAT'S NO LIE.
SOON AFTER THAT, KITTY AND ORORO ARE ON THEIR WAY...
... STROLLING HAPPILY THROUGH THE FOG-SHROUDED VILLAGE IN SEARCH OF A TAXI, THE CARES AND WORRIES OF RECENT DAYS PUSHED ASIDE FOR THE MOMENT BY THE SIMPLE JOY OF BEING ALIVE.

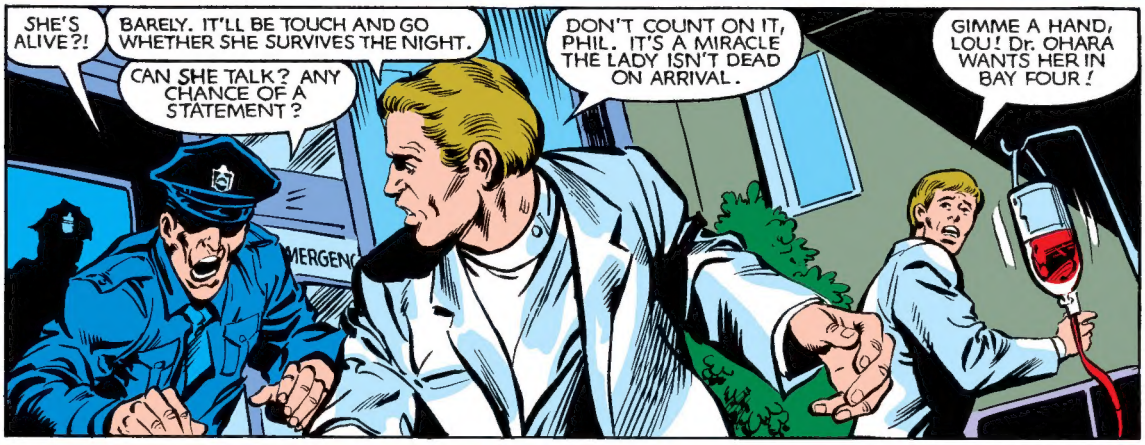
THIS IS THE RIO DIABLO -- A REMOTE STRETCH OF NEW MEXICO DESERT THAT ALEX SUMMERS, ONCE AN X-MAN, HAS MADE HIS HOME...
... AND WHERE HIS BROTHER, SCOTT, HAS COME TO VISIT.
I'M SORRY TO HEAR ABOUT PROFESSOR XAVIER, SCOTT.
WE'VE TRIED EVERYTHING TO BRING HIM OUT OF HIS CATATONIC TRANCE -- AND TO LEARN WHAT CAUSED IT -- BUT NOTHING'S WORKED.
AND THEN, THERE'S DAD.
YEAH. WHAT DO YOU SAY WHEN YOUR FATHER POPS UP AFTER 20 YEARS? THAT REUNION MUST'VE BEEN ROUGH FOR YOU, SCOTT. AT LEAST, WHEN I WAS ADOPTED, I HAD SURROGATE PARENTS TO LOVE, WHO LOVED ME.
YOU HAD NOTHING.
I SURVIVED, THEN AND NOW.
LIFE IS MORE THAN SIMPLE SURVIVAL.
PERHAPS.
SPEAKING OF SURVIVAL, HAVE YOU BEEN PRACTICING THE USE OF YOUR POWERS AS HAVOK?
SURE HAVE, BIG BROTHER.
PROVE IT!
SCOTT SUMMERS' OPTIC BLASTS PUNCH A ROCK INTO THE DARKENING SKY.
HOW'S THAT?
AT THE APOGEE OF ITS CLIMB, ALEX FIRES A COSMIC ENERGY STARBOLT THAT SHATTERS IT.
NOT BAD.
YOU PULVERISED THE PIECES -- INTO DUST!
ALL THAT POWER, SCOTTY --
-- WITH ONLY YOUR RUBY QUARTZ GLASSES TO HOLD IT IN CHECK. I'M NOT SURE I COULD HANDLE THAT KIND OF PRESSURE, OR RESPONSIBILITY.
YOU'D DO FINE, ALEX.
SOON, BACK AT THE CABIN ALEX SHARES WITH LORNA DANE -- ALSO A FORMER X-MAN, POLARIS, MUTANT MISTRESS OF MAGNETISM...
WE'RE HOME, MY LOVE!
ABOUT TIME! WASH UP, YOU TWO, AND JOIN YOUR DAD AT THE TABLE. I'LL SERVE DINNER. IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT -- TOUGH.

Mmmm -- SUPERB! MY COMPLIMENTS TO THE CHEF.
THANK YOU, Mr. SUMMERS. BUT IF YOU THINK I'M, GOOD, TASTE ALEX'S COOKING.
IT'S JUST MY WAY OF GETTING OUT OF DOING THE DISHES.
DAD, WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS? WILL YOU STAY?
FOR A WHILE, SCOTT. I'M GLAD TO SEE YOU AND ALEX -- WE'VE A LOT OF CATCHING UP TO DO -- BUT I'VE BEEN AWAY TOO LONG. I FEEL SO OUT OF PLACE ON EARTH--
--TWENTY YEARS BEHIND THE TIMES, YET LIGHT YEARS AHEAD OF THEM.
IF -- WHEN -- YOU LEAVE, WHAT ABOUT US? WOULD YOU WANT US TO COME WITH YOU?
SCOTT, ALEX -- MY DEAR BOYS--
--I ...DON'T KNOW.
NEW YORK:
YOU WERE IN A CIRCUS? NEAT!
LOVELY LADY, I WAS A STAR --eh?!
THE PHONE! I'LL GET IT!
BRRING!
HI, GUYS! JUST ME, CHECKING IN. I'M FINE. MY FOLKS ARE... OKAY. CAN I SPEAK TO ORORO?
SHE ISN'T HERE, KITTY. ISN'T SHE WITH YOU?
SOMETHING WRONG?
I'M NOT SURE. KITTY SAYS ORORO LEFT HOURS AGO...
...THAT SHE WAS RETURNING DIRECTLY TO THE APARTMENT.
BUT IF SHE ISN'T HERE, WHERE IS SHE? WHY HASN'T SHE TELEPHONED?!
WHAT COULD HAVE HAPPENED TO HER?!?

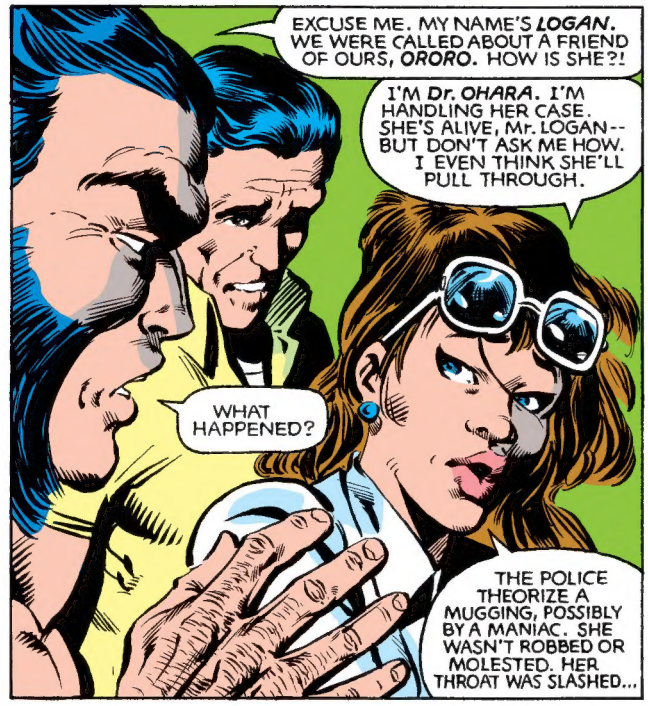
ST. VINCENT'S HOSPITAL.
MERGENCY ENTRANCE
AMBULANCE

HEADS UP, PEOPLE! WE GOT A HOT ONE!
FEMALE, BLACK, MID-TWENTIES, I THINK. AN ASSAULT, MAYBE WORSE.
EMERG

IT'S A THROAT WOUND, DOC, A BAD ONE. THERE'S DAMAGE TO THE JUGULAR. THE BLEEDING'S UNDER CONTROL, BUT HER PRESSURE'S WAY DOWN. SHE LOST A LOT OF BLOOD BEFORE WE REACHED HER.
TYPE AND CROSS-MATCH HER. FAST.

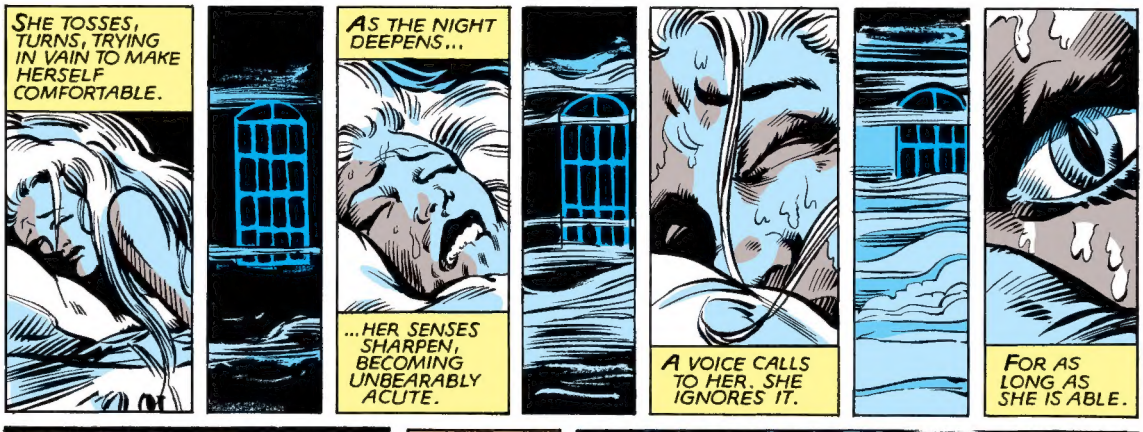

SHE'S ALIVE?!
BARELY. IT'LL BE TOUCH AND GO WHETHER SHE SURVIVES THE NIGHT.
CAN SHE TALK? ANY CHANCE OF A STATEMENT?
DON'T COUNT ON IT, PHIL. IT'S A MIRACLE THE LADY ISN'T DEAD ON ARRIVAL.
GIMME A HAND, LOU! Dr. OHARA WANTS HER IN BAY FOUR!
MERGENC

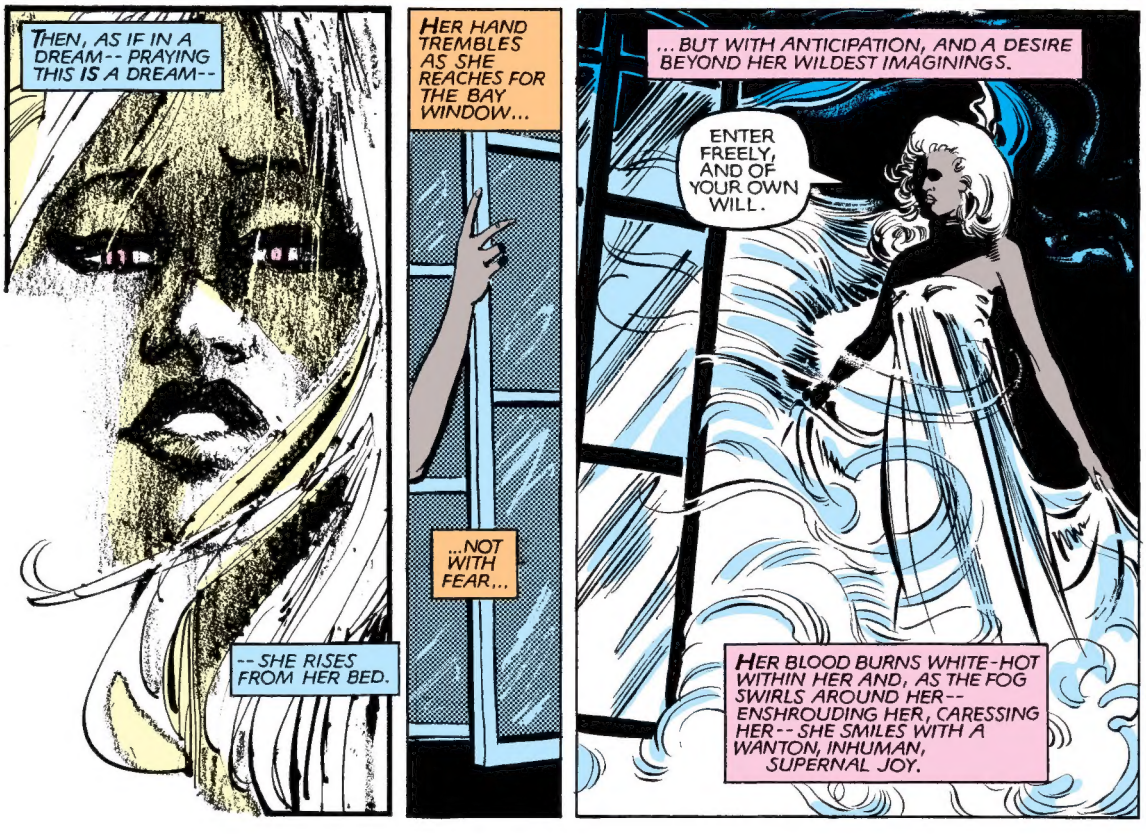
FROM THE VICTIM'S WALLET, THE POLICE GAIN HER NEW YORK ADDRESS. A PHONE CALL IS MADE AND VERY SOON AFTER THAT...
... TWO OF HER FRIENDS ARRIVE.
BE CALM, TOVARISCH.
EMERG
I'M COOL AS ICE, PETEY. I WON'T DO A FLAMIN' THING--
--'TIL I FIND WHOEVER DID THIS TO ORORO.

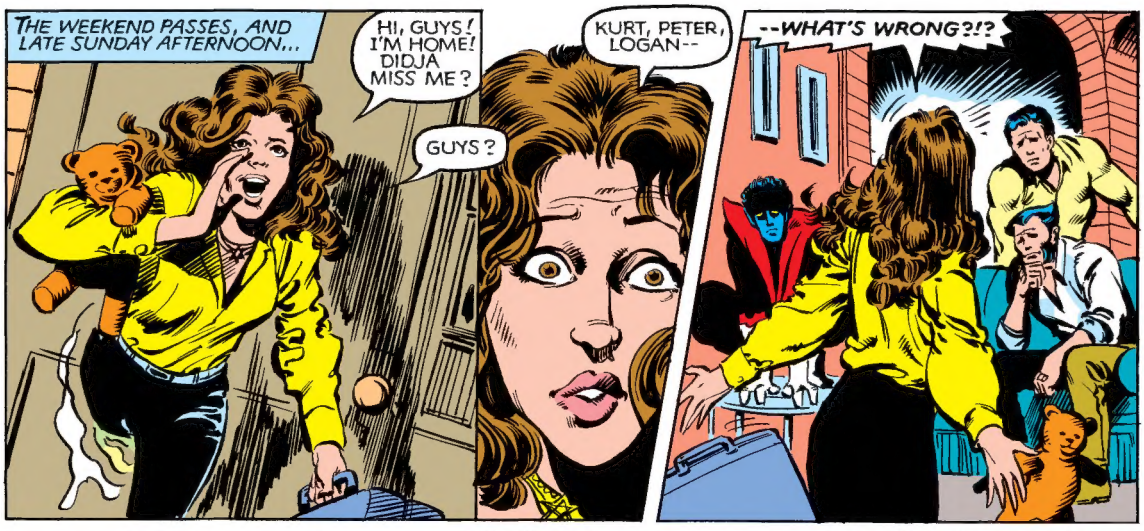

EXCUSE ME. MY NAME'S LOGAN. WE WERE CALLED ABOUT A FRIEND OF OURS, ORORO. HOW IS SHE?!
I'M Dr. OHARA. I'M HANDLING HER CASE. SHE'S ALIVE, Mr. LOGAN-- BUT DON'T ASK ME HOW. I EVEN THINK SHE'LL PULL THROUGH.
WHAT HAPPENED?
THE POLICE THEORIZE A MUGGING, POSSIBLY BY A MANIAC. SHE WASN'T ROBBED OR MOLESTED. HER THROAT WAS SLASHED...

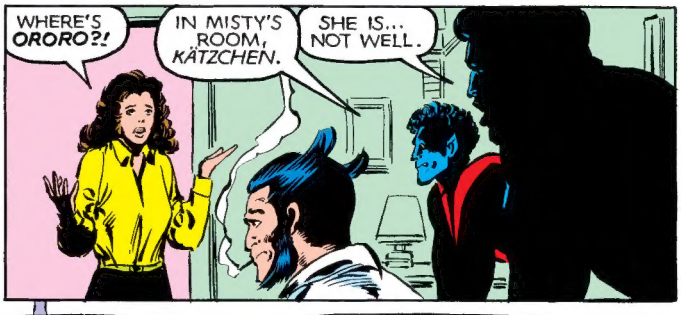
THE DAMAGE TURNED OUT TO LOOK FAR WORSE THAN IT ACTUALLY WAS. THERE WAS SOME BLOOD LOSS, BUT NOTHING CRITICAL. SHE REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS A WHILE AGO AND GAVE THE POLICE A STATEMENT.
WE WANTED TO GIVE HER A WHOLE BLOOD TRANSFUSION, BUT WE COULDN'T MATCH HER TYPE. HER TESTS PRODUCED SOME EXTRAORDINARY RESULTS. I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THEM. I'D LIKE TO INVESTIGATE FURTHER.
THE MUTANT GENES THAT GIVE US OUR POWERS ALSO MAKE OUR BLOOD UNIQUE. IF THIS DOC KEEPS POKIN' ABOUT, SHE'LL REALIZE WHAT 'RORO IS-- AND POSSIBLY WHO SHE IS. THE X-MEN'S COVER'LL BE BLOWN WIDE OPEN.
REGARDLESS, I'D LIKE TO KEEP ORORO HERE FOR A FEW DAYS, FOR OBSERVATION, JUST IN CASE. SHE'S SUFFERED A SEVERE TRAUMA-- PHYSICALLY AND PSYCHOLOGICALLY.
SHE DOESN'T EVEN REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED, OR WHO ATTACKED HER.
I'VE BEEN TALKING WITH HER. SHE SEEMS A STRONG WOMAN--IN SPIRIT AND IN FLESH. WITH HELP, FROM HER FRIENDS, WITH LUCK, SHE SHOULD RECOVER COMPLETELY--HEY!
WHAT THE BLAZES ARE YOU DOING?! CLIMB BACK INTO BED THIS INSTANT!
ORORO--?
PETER! LOGAN!
I FEEL... VERY FOOLISH, AFTER ALL WE'VE BEEN THROUGH, TO FALL PREY TO A COMMON MUGGER.
I DO NOT MEAN TO CAUSE YOU TROUBLE, Dr. OHARA-- BUT I REALLY FEEL MUCH BETTER.
IF YOU WANT TO LEAVE, I CAN'T STOP YOU. BUT I THINK YOU'RE MAKING A MISTAKE.
I CANNOT STAY. THAT RISKS COMPROMISING THE X-MEN.
YET, I FEEL STRANGELY... SAFE HERE.
BUT WHY?! WHY SHOULD I SUDDENLY FEAR THE NIGHT?
IN THE FOG--ARE THOSE... EYES?!
NO, JUST MY IMAGINATION.
Ahhh, THE NIGHT-- I LOVE IT SO.
I APPRECIATE YOUR CONCERN, Dr. OHARA...
...BUT I WOULD RATHER RETURN HOME.
SUIT YOURSELF. I'LL PREPARE YOUR RELEASE FORMS.

EYES CLOSE. EYES OPEN. AROUND HER IS DARKNESS AND SILENCE. SHE CAN HEAR THE FAINT MURMUR OF HER FRIENDS' VOICES-- SO NEAR YET SO FAR AWAY. SURPRISINGLY, SHE FINDS HERSELF FEELING TOTALLY ALONE. THAT FRIGHTENS HER.

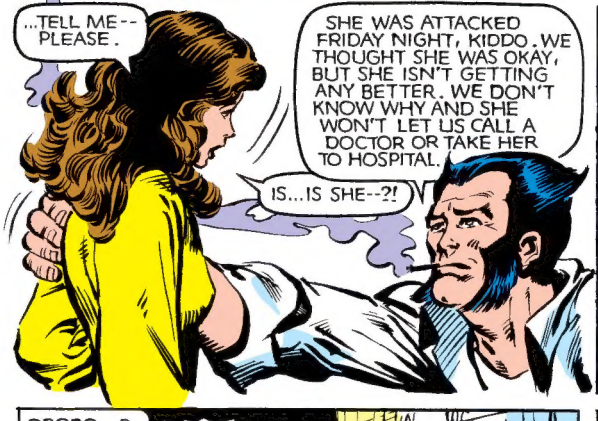


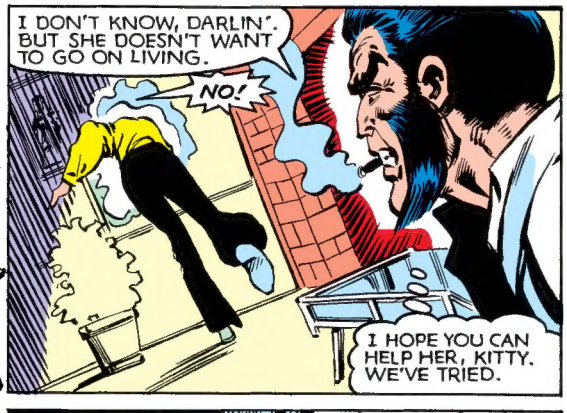



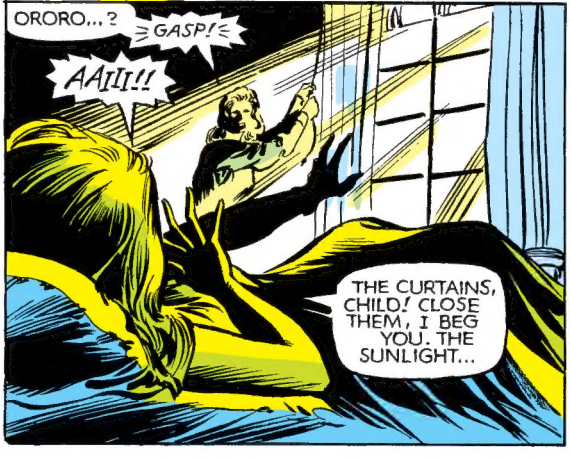

THE WEEKEND PASSES, AND LATE SUNDAY AFTERNOON...
HI, GUYS! I'M HOME! DIDJA MISS ME?
GUYS?
KURT, PETER, LOGAN--
--WHAT'S WRONG?!?


WHERE'S OROROP?!
IN MISTY'S ROOM, KÄTZCHEN.
SHE IS... NOT WELL.

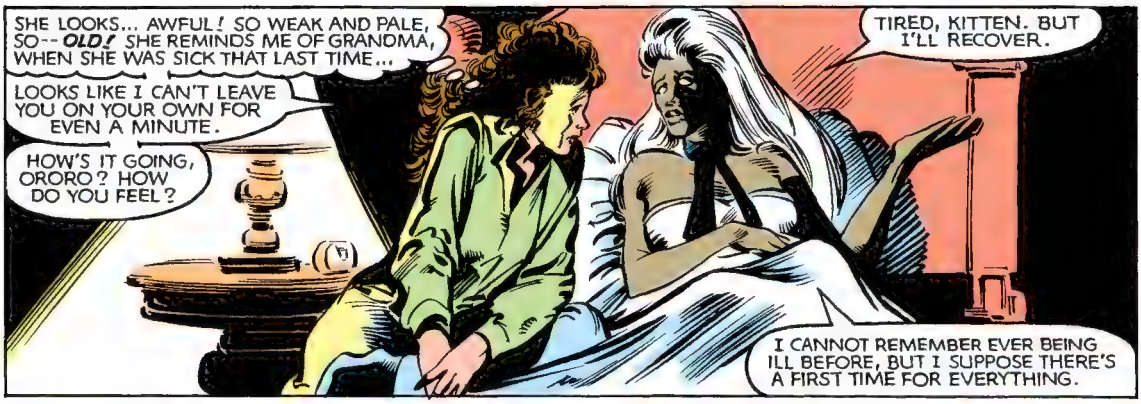
WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?! IS SHE SICK?! TELL ME!
I KNEW I SHOULD HAVE PHONED, TO MAKE SURE THINGS WERE OKAY--BUT I WAS HAVING SUCH A GOOD TIME...
LOGAN...


...TELL ME--PLEASE.
SHE WAS ATTACKED FRIDAY NIGHT, KIDDO. WE THOUGHT SHE WAS OKAY, BUT SHE ISN'T GETTING ANY BETTER. WE DON'T KNOW WHY AND SHE WON'T LET US CALL A DOCTOR OR TAKE HER TO HOSPITAL.
IS...IS SHE--?!


I DON'T KNOW, DARLIN'. BUT SHE DOESN'T WANT TO GO ON LIVING.
NO!
I HOPE YOU CAN HELP HER, KITTY. WE'VE TRIED.

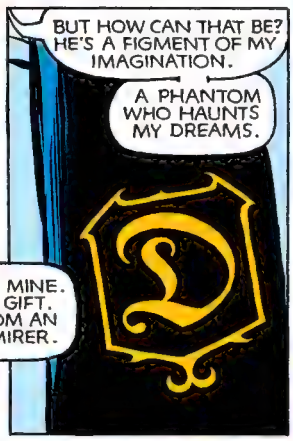

OROROP...?
GASP!
AAIII!!
THE CURTAINS, CHILD! CLOSE THEM, I BEG YOU. THE SUNLIGHT...

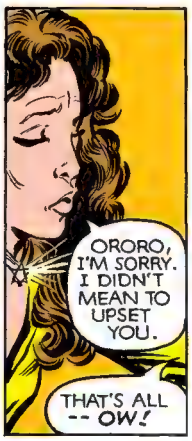
...HURTS.

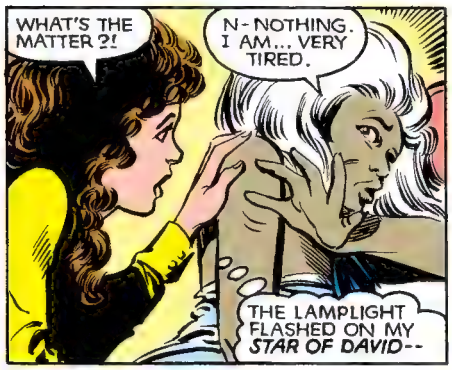

SHE LOOKS... AWFUL! SO WEAK AND PALE, SO-- OLD! SHE REMINDS ME OF GRANDMA, WHEN SHE WAS SICK THAT LAST TIME...
LOOKS LIKE I CAN'T LEAVE YOU ON YOUR OWN FOR EVEN A MINUTE.
HOW'S IT GOING, ORORO? HOW DO YOU FEEL?
TIRED, KITTEN. BUT I'LL RECOVER.
I CANNOT REMEMBER EVER BEING ILL BEFORE, BUT I SUPPOSE THERE'S A FIRST TIME FOR EVERYTHING.

THE OTHERS ARE TERRIBLY WORRIED. ME, TOO.
THERE IS NO NEED.
I CAN SEE THAT. YOU'RE WEARING A LOVELY SCARF. IT'S PURE SILK. IS IT HARMONY'S?

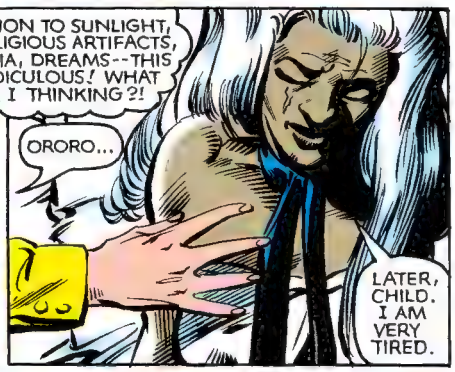
THIS? NO.
IT IS MINE. A... GIFT. FROM AN ADMIRER.


BUT HOW CAN THAT BE? HE'S A FIGMENT OF MY IMAGINATION.
A PHANTOM WHO HAUNTS MY DREAMS.

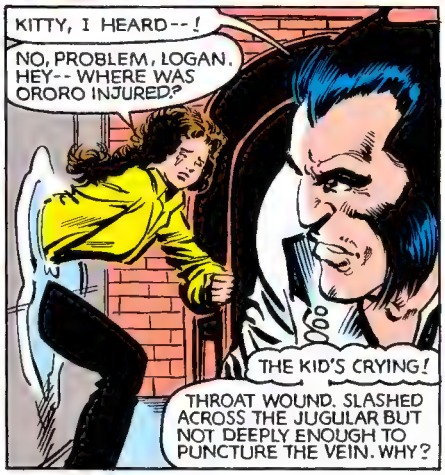

ORORO, I'M SORRY. I DIDN'T MEAN TO UPSET YOU.
THAT'S ALL -- OW!


WHAT'S THE MATTER?!
N-NOTHING. I AM... VERY TIRED.
THE LAMPLIGHT FLASHED ON MY STAR OF DAVID--

--AND ORORO FLINCHED!
AVERSION TO SUNLIGHT, TO RELIGIOUS ARTIFACTS, ANEMIA, DREAMS--THIS IS RIDICULOUS! WHAT AM I THINKING?!

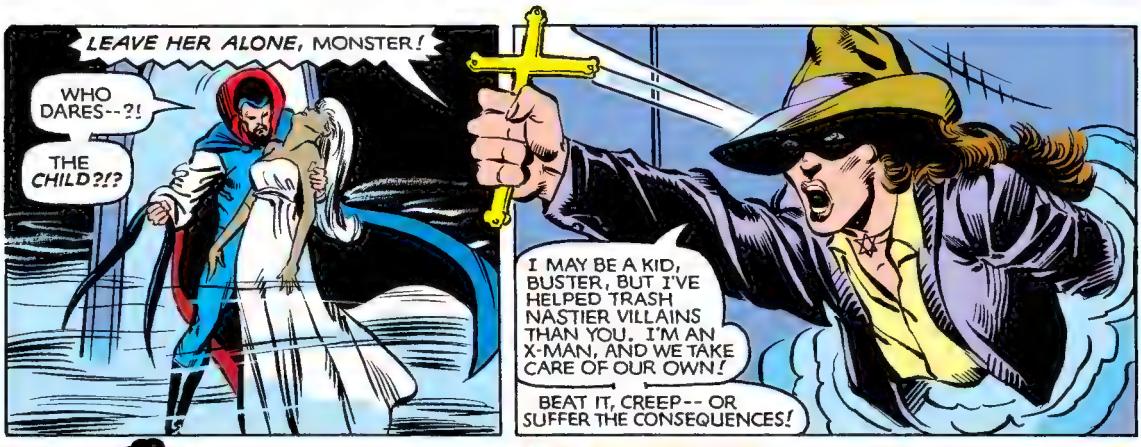

ORORO...
LATER, CHILD. I AM VERY TIRED.

BUT... WHUNFFF!
I SAID, LEAVE ME BE!


KITTY, I HEARD--!
NO, PROBLEM, LOGAN. HEY-- WHERE WAS ORORO INJURED?
THE KID'S CRYING!
THROAT WOUND. SLASHED ACROSS THE JUGULAR BUT NOT DEEPLY ENOUGH TO PUNCTURE THE VEIN. WHY?

JUST ASKING. GOTTA RUN. ERRANDS. SEE YA LATER!
WHAT THE BLAZES WAS THAT ABOUT?!

WITH THE NIGHT COMES A FOG TO BLANKET GREENWICH VILLAGE -- ONE THAT SEEMS ALMOST ALIVE AS IT SWIRLS THROUGH EERILY DESERTED STREETS TO CONCENTRATE ABOUT A CERTAIN BROWNSTONE OFF WASHINGTON SQUARE.
INSIDE, ORORO STIRS, RISES, AND ONCE MORE THROWS OPEN THE WINDOWS...
...TO ADMIT HER LOVER.
HE DOES NOT KEEP HER WAITING.
ORORO! YOUR NAME MEANS "BEAUTY."
THROUGH ME, WIND-RIDER, THAT BEAUTY SHALL REMAIN UNCHANGED 'TIL THE END OF TIME. THROUGH ME, YOU SHALL HAVE THE IMMORTALITY A GODDESS DESERVES. DO YOU WISH THIS?
YES.
GOOD.
COME TO ME, WOMAN. YIELD TO MY DREAD EMBRACE. JOIN YOUR BLOOD AND LIFE AND SOUL TO MINE AS, WITH A KISS, I MAKE YOU THE BRIDE OF THE PRINCE OF DARKNESS!
DRACULA!


LEAVE HER ALONE, MONSTER!
WHO DARES--?!
THE CHILD?!?
I MAY BE A KID, BUSTER, BUT I'VE HELPED TRASH NASTIER VILLAINS THAN YOU. I'M AN X-MAN, AND WE TAKE CARE OF OUR OWN!
BEAT IT, CREEP-- OR SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES!

THE CROSS!!

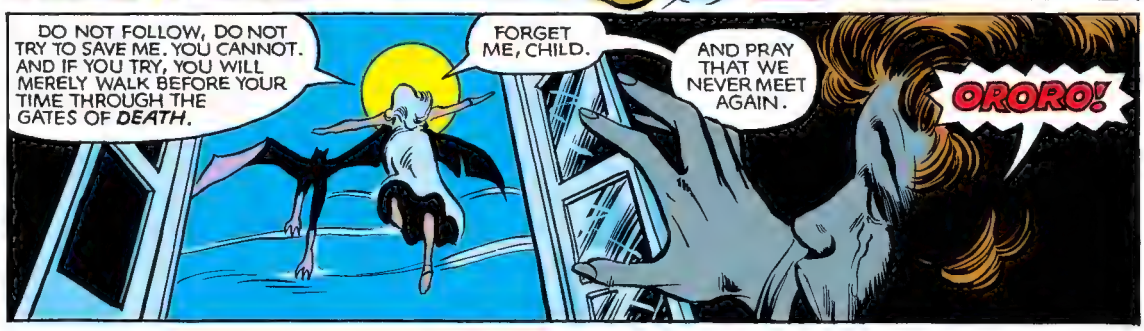
WAIT! THE VERY PRESENCE OF THAT HOLY OBJECT SHOULD BE ANATHEMA TO ME...
...YET IT HAS ABSOLUTELY NO EFFECT!

LITTLE FOOL, YOU HAVE OUT-SMARTED YOURSELF! THE CROSS HAS NO POWER OVER SUCH AS I IF THE WIELDER DOES NOT BELIEVE IN IT!
YOU ARE NO CHRISTIAN, BUT A HEBREW!
THE SPEED AND VIOLENCE OF DRACULA'S ATTACK CATCH KITTY BY SURPRISE, SO MUCH SO THAT SHE'S UNABLE TO PHASE OUT OF HIS GRASP.

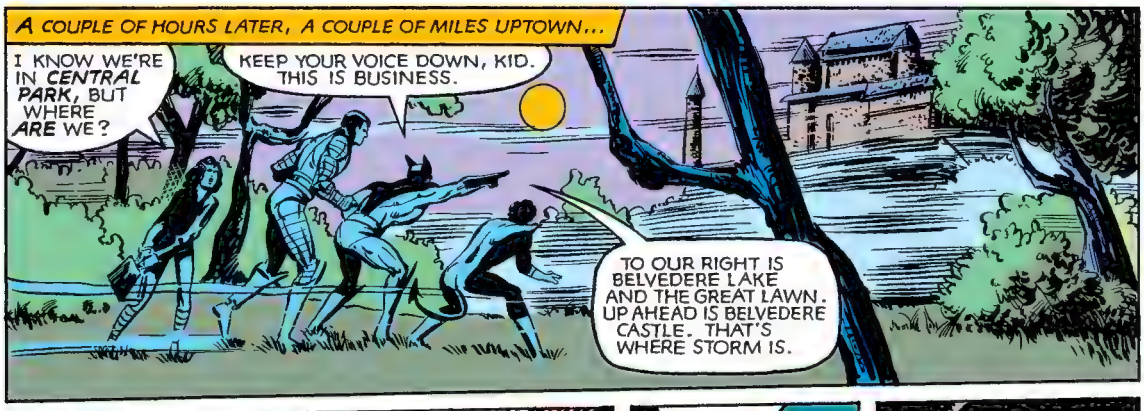
BUT THEN, AS HE LUNGES FOR HER THROAT...
ARRRGH!
Huh?!? HIS HAND-- IT'S BURNING!

AROUND MY NECK-- MY SILVER STAR OF DAVID! THAT'S WHAT STOPPED HIM! THANK GOD!

ORORO, HE'S ON THE ROPES! WE'VE GOT OUR CHANCE! LET'S GET OUTTA--
UNGH!
NONE MAY HARM MY LORD, KITTEN-- NOT EVEN YOU.


DO NOT FOLLOW, DO NOT TRY TO SAVE ME. YOU CANNOT. AND IF YOU TRY, YOU WILL MERELY WALK BEFORE YOUR TIME THROUGH THE GATES OF DEATH.
FORGET ME, CHILD.
AND PRAY THAT WE NEVER MEET AGAIN.
ORORO!

KATYA!
WE HEARD A FIGHT, KIDDO. WHAT GIVES?!
KITTY, WHAT'S THE MATTER?! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?!
WHERE'S ORORO?!
G-GONE. HE TOOK HER --
--DRACULA!
CALM DOWN, KITTEN. START FROM THE BEGINNING. TELL US EVERYTHING.
AND IN A CHOKED, HALTING VOICE, SHE DOES SO...
I KEPT THINGS TO MYSELF BECAUSE... BECAUSE I DIDN'T THINK YOU'D BELIEVE ME. I DIDN'T COMPLETELY BELIEVE IT MYSELF--
-- UNTIL I SAW HIM.
'RORO'S HAD A PRETTY ROUGH WEEKEND, PUN'KIN. SURE SHE DIDN'T JUST FLIP OUT?
HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THIS SCARF?! IT ISN'T HERS!
OKAY, IT BELONGS TO HARMONY OR MISTY...
DO NOT SCOFF, WOLVERINE. KITTY IS NO CHILD. I TRUST HER WORD AS I WOULD MY OWN--OR YOURS.
ALSO, MEIN FREUND, IN MY HOMELAND, BAVARIA, WE HAVE LEARNED FROM BITTER EXPERIENCE NOT TO TAKE VAMPIRES--ESPECIALLY DRACULA--LIGHTLY.
EVEN IF I AM FANTASIZING -- EVEN IF ORORO'S ONLY SICK, AS YOU SAY-- WE CAN'T LET HER FLY AWAY LIKE THIS!
WE HAVE TO FIND HER, HELP HER, BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!
NO ARGUMENT THERE--BUT IT WON'T BE EASY PICKING 'RORO'S SCENT OUT OF THE ATMOSPHERIC SOUP SURROUNDING THIS CITY.
THAT'LL TAX EVEN MY TRACKING ABILITIES TO THE LIMIT.
STILL, WHAT'S LIFE WITHOUT A LITTLE CHALLENGE, eh?


A COUPLE OF HOURS LATER, A COUPLE OF MILES UPTOWN...
I KNOW WE'RE IN CENTRAL PARK, BUT WHERE ARE WE?
KEEP YOUR VOICE DOWN, KID. THIS IS BUSINESS.
TO OUR RIGHT IS BELVEDERE LAKE AND THE GREAT LAWN. UP AHEAD IS BELVEDERE CASTLE. THAT'S WHERE STORM IS.

THEN, LET'S GO!
HOLD IT! SOMETHING'S SCREWY. IT'S TOO QUIET, TOO STILL.
ON YOUR TOES, TROOPS. WE'RE NOT ALONE.

QUITE TRUE, HUMANS.
YOUR FRIEND IS MINE, X-MEN. SHE IS LOST TO YOU FOREVER!!
BY COMING TO HER RESCUE, YOU HAVE MERELY SEALED YOUR OWN DOOMS!

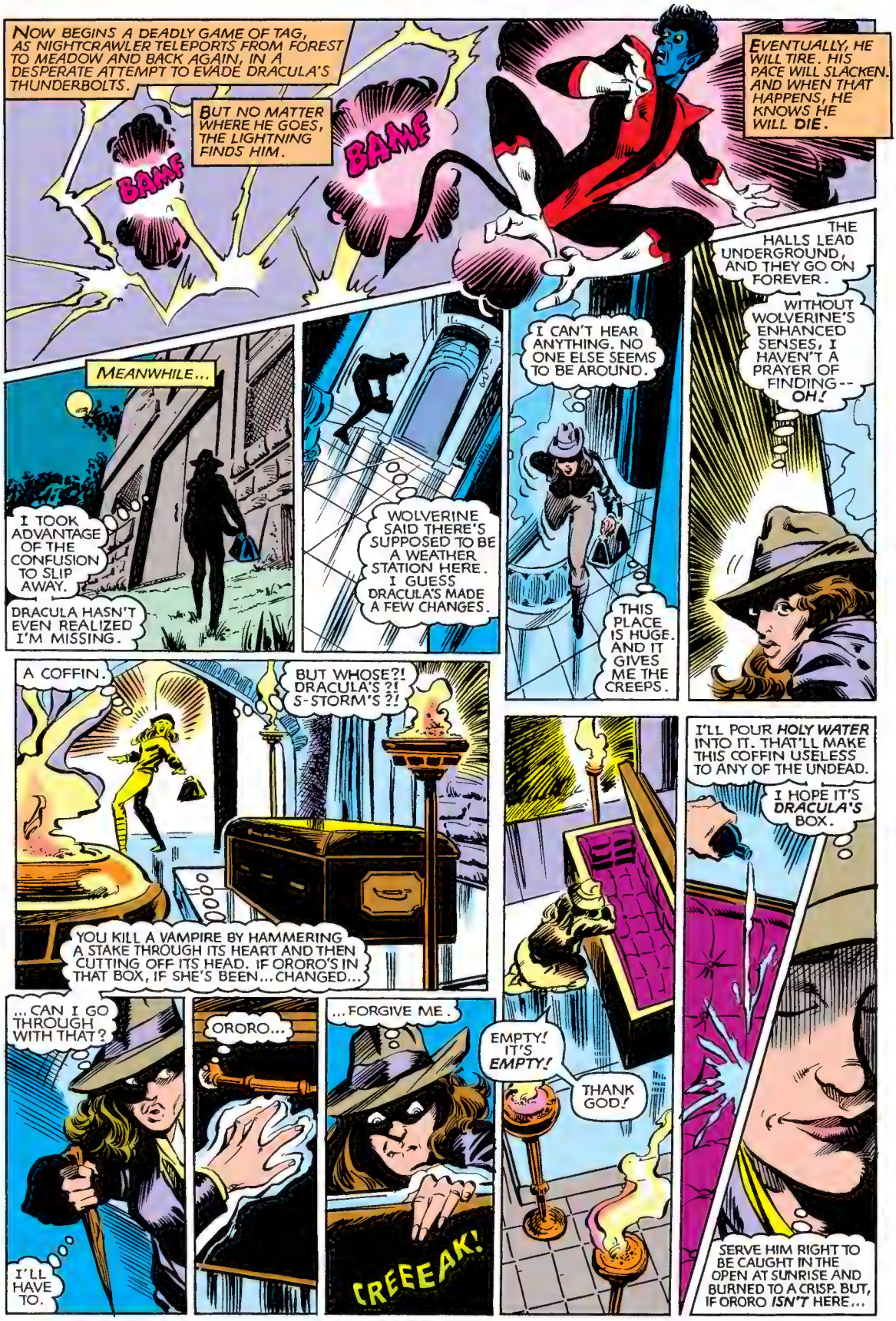
BEHOLD!
FROM ONE SIDE, COME RATS...

...FROM THE OTHER, WILD DOGS--
--IMPOSSIBLY LARGE, INCREDIBLY VICIOUS, AS HUNGRY FOR BLOOD AS THEIR UNDEAD MASTER. BUT AS THEY ATTACK...

...SO DO THE X-MEN!
WE HAVE HEARD SUCH THREATS BEFORE, VAMPYR-- BUT WE STILL LIVE!
YOUR ARROGANCE RIVALS YOUR STUPIDITY, MORTAL.
NONE MAY LAY HANDS ON THE LORD OF DARKNESS!
KRAK

BACK OFF, BOWSER!
HOW YOU DOIN', COLOSSUS ?!
I AM WELL, TOVARISCH. WHILE I REMAIN IN MY ARMORED FORM, THESE ANIMALS POSE NO DANGER TO ME.
NIGHTCRAWLER IS STUNNED, BUT CONSCIOUS. I SHALL PROTECT HIM 'TIL HE RECOVERS.
IS THIS THE BEST OUR FOE CAN DO?
I HOPE SO, BUT I KINDA DOUBT IT.
LET'S TRY AN' END THIS QUICK. SET ME UP A "FASTBALL SPECIAL!"
DA!
HAHA!
HAHAHAA!
WHUNNFF!
IN A SMOOTH, FLUID MOTION, COLOSSUS SCOOPS UP HIS FELLOW MUTANT AND HEAVES HIM AT DRACULA.
BUT AT THE LAST INSTANT, THE VAMPIRE LORD TRANSFORMS HIMSELF INTO MIST, LAUGHING AS WOLVERINE SAILS HELPLESSLY THROUGH HIM, CLAWS CUTTING EMPTY AIR. AND WHEN THE X-MAN LANDS, THE DOGS ARE WAITING.
YOU MAY CERTAINLY TRY, MY YOUNG RUSSIAN COMRADE. BUT THOUGH YOUR BODY IS SOLID STEEL, AND YOUR STRENGTH PRODIGIOUS...
YOU SHOULD HAVE STAYED AS A SCRAP OF FOG, DEMON.
AS A MAN, I CAN STRIKE YOU!

-- IT IS DRACULA WHO SHALL EVER PREVAIL!
BY THE WHITE WOLF!
WE CAN'T MATCH HIS RAW POWER, WOLVERINE. BUT THERE ARE OTHER WAYS TO DEFEAT HIM.
I'VE SEEN THE MOVIES, ELF. I KNOW WHAT TO DO.
EXTRUDING A SINGLE CLAW FROM EACH HAND...
...WOLVERINE FORMS THE SIGN OF THE CROSS.
SNIKT
SNIKT
AS I TOLD THE CHILD, THAT PLOY IS USELESS...
...UNLESS YOU TRULY BELIEVE.
IN THAT CASE, VAMPYR, YOUR CAUSE IS LOST--
--FOR I BELIEVE!
YAHHRRR!
YOU... HAVE HURT ME, NIGHTCRAWLER, BUT I AM FAR FROM BEATEN.
MY POWERS ARE LEGION! WITH BUT A THOUGHT, I CAN SUMMON LIGHTNING FROM THE HEAVENS!
YIKES!
BAMF

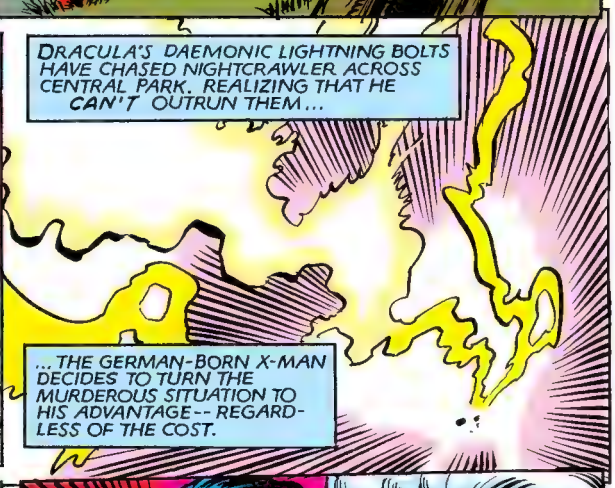

NOW BEGINS A DEADLY GAME OF TAG, AS NIGHTCRAWLER TELEPORTS FROM FOREST TO MEADOW AND BACK AGAIN, IN A DESPERATE ATTEMPT TO EVADE DRACULA'S THUNDERBOLTS.
BUT NO MATTER WHERE HE GOES, THE LIGHTNING FINDS HIM.
BAMF
BAMF
EVENTUALLY, HE WILL TIRE. HIS PACE WILL SLACKEN. AND WHEN THAT HAPPENS, HE KNOWS HE WILL DIE.
MEANWHILE...
I TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE CONFUSION TO SLIP AWAY.
DRACULA HASN'T EVEN REALIZED I'M MISSING.
WOLVERINE SAID THERE'S SUPPOSED TO BE A WEATHER STATION HERE. I GUESS DRACULA'S MADE A FEW CHANGES.
I CAN'T HEAR ANYTHING. NO ONE ELSE SEEMS TO BE AROUND.
THIS PLACE IS HUGE. AND IT GIVES ME THE CREEPS.
THE HALLS LEAD UNDERGROUND, AND THEY GO ON FOREVER.
WITHOUT WOLVERINE'S ENHANCED SENSES, I HAVEN'T A PRAYER OF FINDING-- OH!
A COFFIN.
BUT WHOSE?! DRACULA'S ?! S-STORM'S ?!
YOU KILL A VAMPIRE BY HAMMERING A STAKE THROUGH ITS HEART AND THEN CUTTING OFF ITS HEAD. IF ORORO'S IN THAT BOX, IF SHE'S BEEN...CHANGED...
... CAN I GO THROUGH WITH THAT?
I'LL HAVE TO.
ORORO...
... FORGIVE ME.
CREEEAK!
EMPTY! IT'S EMPTY!
THANK GOD!
I'LL POUR HOLY WATER INTO IT. THAT'LL MAKE THIS COFFIN USELESS TO ANY OF THE UNDEAD.
I HOPE IT'S DRACULA'S BOX.
SERVE HIM RIGHT TO BE CAUGHT IN THE OPEN AT SUNRISE AND BURNED TO A CRISP. BUT, IF ORORO ISN'T HERE...

WHERE IS SHE?!?
SLAP!
UNNNGNH!
HULLO, KITTEN.
OH, NO! OH, NO!
HOW NICE OF YOU TO VISIT.
HER EYES, RED, HER TEETH, FANGED-- LIKE DRACULA'S! BUT HOW?! YOU DON'T BECOME A TRUE VAMPIRE 'TIL YOU RISE FROM THE GRAVE THREE DAYS AFTER YOU DIE.
IF ORORO'S STANDING HERE, SHE CAN'T BE DEAD--AND IF SHE ISN'T DEAD, SHE CAN'T BE A VAMPIRE. THE TRANSFORMATION MUST BEGIN WHILE YOU'RE STILL ALIVE. AND THE PROCESS IS WARPING ORORO'S MIND.
DON'T RESIST, KITTEN.
I DON'T WANT TO HURT YOU. THE CHANGE IS REALLY QUITE WONDERFUL.
KITTY-- STOP!
DON'T WORRY, ORORO--
--I'M NOT GOING FAR.
THAT STAKE IS NO DEFENSE, CHILD. WITH MY MUTANT ELEMENTAL POWERS, I CAN SUMMON A WIND TO BATTER YOU SENSELESS. THERE IS NO ESCAPE.
ORORO, FIGHT HIM! YOU TOLD ME YOU WERE A GODDESS CONSECRATED TO LIFE. PROVE IT! REACH WITHIN YOU-- TO YOUR HEART AND SOUL! FIGHT HIM!

IF YOU CAN'T, IF YOU WANT MY LIFE SO BADLY...
...THEN TAKE IT. I WON'T TRY TO STOP YOU.

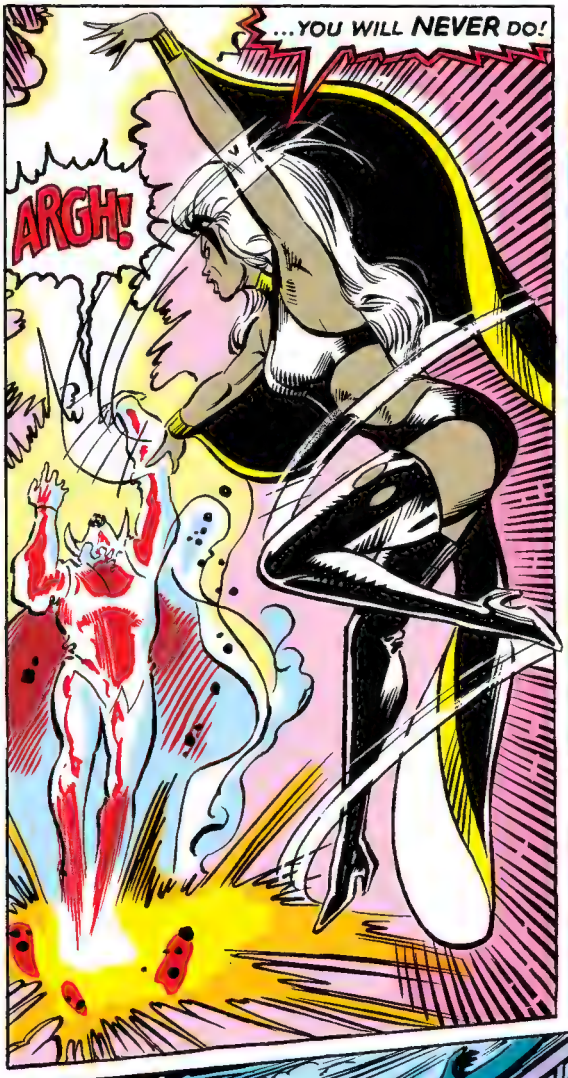
ELSEWHERE...
HE STILL STANDS, WOLVERINE!
SO DO WE, PAL.
AN' WE'LL KEEP HAMMERING AT HIM UNTIL SOMETHING GIVES.

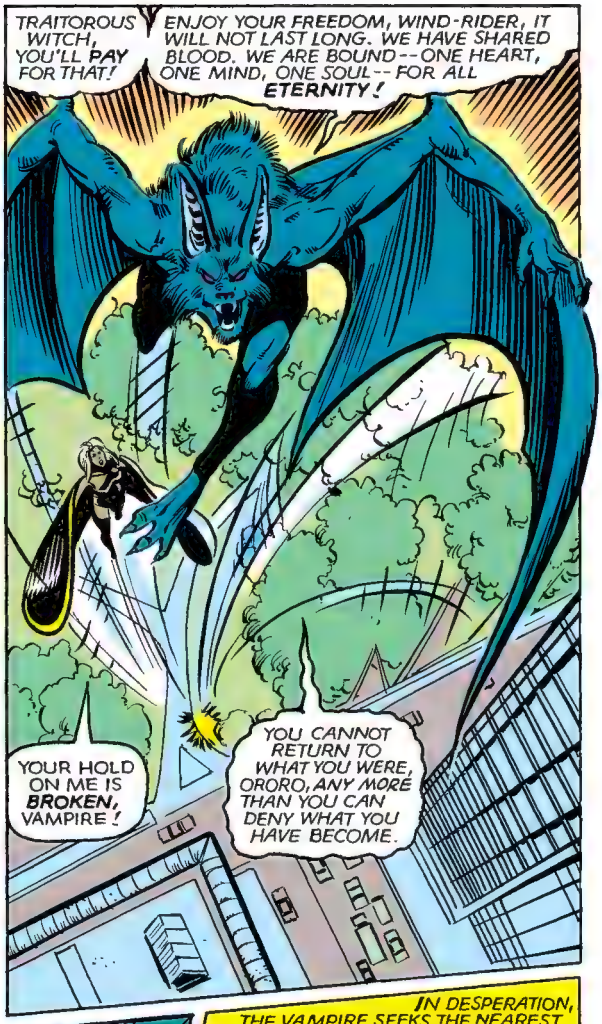
HAVE YOU CONSIDERED, LITTLE MAN, THAT "SOMETHING" MIGHT BE YOU?
NO MORE THAN YOU'VE CONSIDERED...
...THAT YOU MIGHT LOSE!
WHAT?! NIGHTCRAWLER! NO!

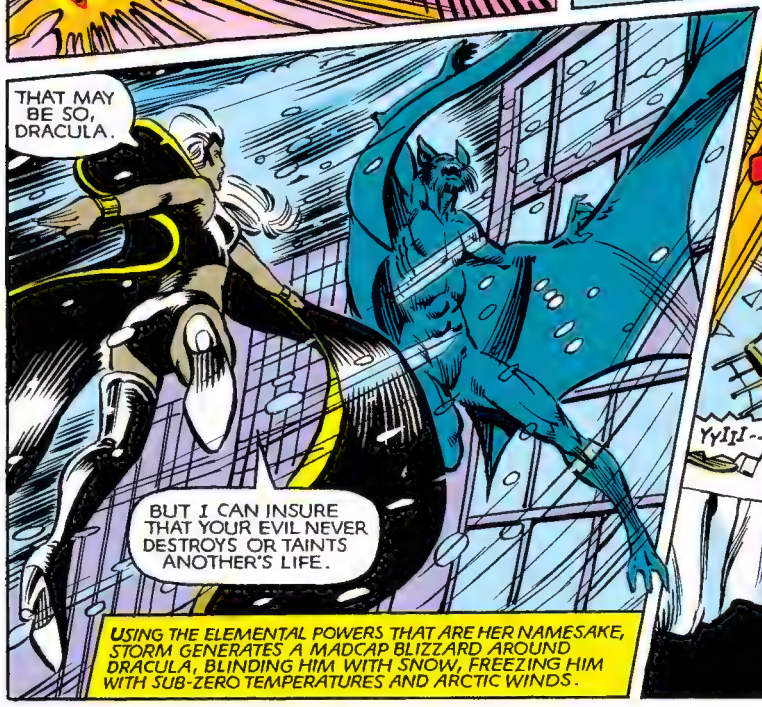

DRACULA'S DAEMONIC LIGHTNING BOLTS HAVE CHASED NIGHTCRAWLER ACROSS CENTRAL PARK. REALIZING THAT HE CAN'T OUTRUN THEM...
...THE GERMAN-BORN X-MAN DECIDES TO TURN THE MURDEROUS SITUATION TO HIS ADVANTAGE -- REGARDLESS OF THE COST.

BUT WHEN THE SMOKE CLEARS...
...ONLY THE X-MEN HAVE FALLEN.
SUCH COURAGE! SUCH AUDACITY! YOUR MUTANT COMRADES ARE INDEED SPLENDID FOES!
WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH THEM, MY LORD?

SLAY THEM!
THAT, DRACULA, IS SOMETHING...


...YOU WILL NEVER DO!
ARGH!


TRAITOROUS WITCH, YOU'LL PAY FOR THAT!
ENJOY YOUR FREEDOM, WIND-RIDER, IT WILL NOT LAST LONG. WE HAVE SHARED BLOOD. WE ARE BOUND--ONE HEART, ONE MIND, ONE SOUL--FOR ALL ETERNITY!
YOUR HOLD ON ME IS BROKEN, VAMPIRE!
YOU CANNOT RETURN TO WHAT YOU WERE, ORORO, ANY MORE THAN YOU CAN DENY WHAT YOU HAVE BECOME.


THAT MAY BE SO, DRACULA.
BUT I CAN INSURE THAT YOUR EVIL NEVER DESTROYS OR TAINTS ANOTHER'S LIFE.
USING THE ELEMENTAL POWERS THAT ARE HER NAMESAKE, STORM GENERATES A MADCAP BLIZZARD AROUND DRACULA, BLINDING HIM WITH SNOW, FREEZING HIM WITH SUB-ZERO TEMPERATURES AND ARCTIC WINDS.

IN DESPERATION, THE VAMPIRE SEEKS THE NEAREST REFUGE, THE "TOP OF THE PARK" RESTAURANT, FIFTY STORIES ABOVE COLUMBUS CIRCLE.
SKRASH!
YYIII--!
LOOK OUT!

STORM PRESSES HER ATTACK, BUT WITH A SKILL BORN OF HALF A THOUSAND YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN THE ARTS OF WAR, DRACULA PARRIES HER FEROCIOUS ASSAULTS.
AND SOON, ALMOST INEXORABLY, THE TIDE OF BATTLE TURNS AGAINST HER.
YOUR ABILITY DOES YOU CREDIT, ORORO, BUT IT WILL AVAIL YOU NAUGHT!
AAIIII--!
I AM YOUR LORD, WOMAN, YOUR MASTER! YOUR WILL IS NOTHING, MINE IS ALL!
BOW BEFORE ME, ORORO!
YIELD!
AUTOMATICALLY, IN OBEDIENCE TO HIS VAMPIRIC COMPULSION, UNABLE AT FIRST TO STOP HERSELF, SHE OBEYS.
BARE YOUR NECK!
TAKE A LAST LOOK AT THE WORLD OF THE LIVING, ORORO. WHEN NEXT YOUR EYES OPEN, YOU WILL BE THE HUNTRESS--AND THESE CREATURES YOUR RIGHTFUL PREY!
AGAIN, SHE REACTS WITHOUT CONSCIOUS THOUGHT, PART OF HER YEARNING FOR DRACULA'S KISS...
...BUT THEN...
NO.
I DEFY YOU, DRACULA. I DENY YOU.
I SHALL NOT KILL. AND YOU CANNOT FORCE ME.
SHE SCOOPS UP A BROKEN TABLE LEG TO SERVE AS AN IMPROVISED STAKE-- BUT FAST THOUGH SHE IS, DRACULA IS FASTER.
TWICE NOW YOU'VE RESISTED MY CONTROL-- SOMETHING I WOULDN'T HAVE DREAMED POSSIBLE. BUT THIS TIME IS THE LAST.
DROP THE WEAPON, WIND-RIDER. YIELD...
...OR I'LL RIP THIS COW'S THROAT OUT!
LET HER GO, DRACULA. NONE SHALL DIE BECAUSE OF ME.

THAT ATTITUDE WILL CHANGE, ONCE YOU'VE JOINED ME AS MY VAMPIRIC CONSORT.
I MEANT WHAT I SAID-- NONE SHALL DIE BECAUSE OF ME.
I WILL BE TRUE TO MYSELF, DRACULA. I WILL NOT SHED THE BLOOD OF INNOCENTS. BUT TO SAVE THEM I WILL DESTROY YOU. REGARDLESS OF HOW LONG IT TAKES, OR THE PRICE I MUST PAY, I WILL END YOUR REIGN OF TERROR.
YOU WOULD NOT BE THE FIRST TO TRY.
BUT I DO NOT WISH US TO BE FOES, ORORO.
HOW CAN WE BE ANYTHING ELSE ?!
YOU MAY TRANSFORM ME INTO A VAMPIRE-- YOU MAY EVEN SLAY ME-- BUT YOU WILL NEVER OWN ME.
I WAS BORN FREE, VAMPIRE, AND FREE I WILL REMAIN!
I KNEW FROM THE MOMENT I TASTED YOUR BLOOD THAT YOU WERE A WOMAN OF RARE BEAUTY, RARE COURAGE, RARE STRENGTH. THOSE QUALITIES ATTRACTED ME TO YOU.
NOW THEY HAVE DEFEATED ME.
WHEN I... LIVED, I WAS A PRINCE. YOU ARE ONE OF A HANDFUL OF WOMEN I HAVE MET SINCE, WORTHY OF BEING MY QUEEN. I OFFER WONDERS BEYOND IMAGINATION, ORORO, BUT I WILL NOT-- I FIND I CANNOT-- FORCE YOU TO ACCEPT THEM.
YOU HAVE EARNED DRACULA'S RESPECT-- AND HENCE, YOUR LIFE.
YOU WON'T ESCAPE THAT EASILY, DRACULA!
DO NOT PUSH YOUR LUCK, WIND-RIDER.
THE WORLD IS VAST. YOU COULD SEARCH FOR A SCORE OF LIFETIMES, AND NEVER FIND EVEN A TRACE OF ME. WHEN NEXT WE MEET-- IF THAT NIGHT EVER COMES -- IT WILL BE IN A TIME AND PLACE OF MY CHOOSING. 'TIL THEN, FAREWELL.

DAWN, GREENWICH VILLAGE...

I'M SORRY I'M LATE, I NEEDED TO BE BY MYSELF FOR AWHILE.

ARE YOU ALL...?!

WE'RE FINE, 'RORO.

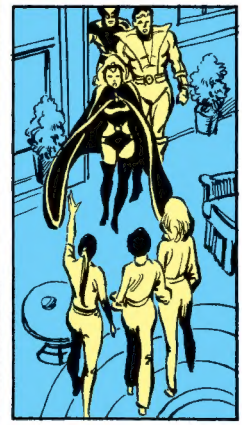
ALBEIT SINGED AROUND THE EDGES. *WIE GEHT ES IHNEN?*

SHE'S FLYING OUT OF THE SUN. SHE DOESN'T LOOK LIKE SHE'S IN PAIN.

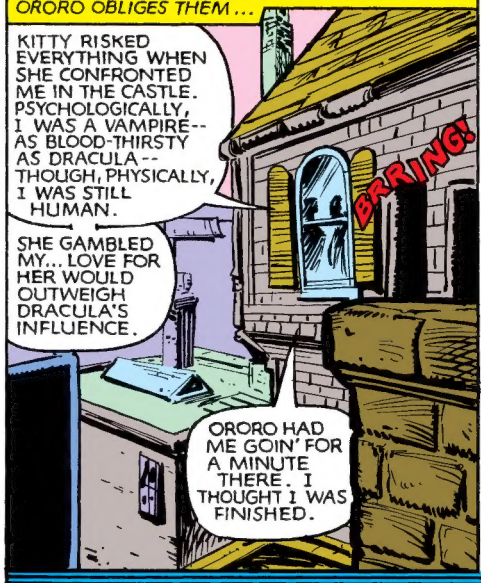
IF SHE CAN STAND THE DAYLIGHT, THE VAMPIRIC INFECTION IS GONE. SHE'S OKAY!

SHE'S *CURED!*

DOWNSTAIRS, JOYFUL REUNIONS CONTINUE AS STORM IS GREETED BY HARMONY, MISTY KNIGHT AND MISTY'S PARTNER AND BEST FRIEND, COLLEEN WING.



EVERYONE WANTS TO KNOW WHAT HAPPENED. AND, ALTHOUGH SHE'D REALLY RATHER NOT, ORORO OBLIGES THEM...



NEXT >> Chutes AND LADDERS! THE GAME OF SUPER HERO MADNESS!

# MINUTEMEN

Sy13nt
Bob